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AUTHOR Singer, Rosanne
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ABSTRACT

Defining ethnic newspapers as those published in a foreign language or in English that address themselves to a national group, this paper presents an overview of such papers currently published in the United States. The paper is organized into three sections. The first deals with the functions served by ethnic papers, including aiding in assimilation, helping to preserve ethnicity, filling news gaps, serving as watchdogs of foreign governments, and contributing to the diversity of political and social thought in the United States. The second section covers the drawbacks of ethnic papers, specifically their high mortality rate, increasing financial difficulties, and the problem they face of incurring criticisms that they are anti-American if they attempt to be outspoken organs in their communities. The third section discusses the future of the ethnic press and concludes that the current emphasis on exploring cultural roots and learning second languages will affect its role. (FL)

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Ethnic Newspapers in the United States

by

Rosanne Singer

Master's Candidate

Journalism Department, Michigan State University

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	HISTORICAL CONTEXT	1
II.	FUNCTIONS ETHNIC PAPERS SERVE	4
	AID ASSIMILATION	
	PRESERVE ETHNICITY	
	FILL NEWS GAPS	
	OBSERVE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS	
	EXPAND UNITED STATES THOUGHT	
III.	DRAWBACKS OF ETHNIC PAPERS	14
	HIGH MORTALITY AND FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES	
	DIVISIVENESS AND LOSS OF POWER	
IV.	FUTURE OF ETHNIC PAPERS	21
V.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	26

I. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first English-language newspaper in America, Publick Occurrences, appeared in 1690 in Boston. Banned by British authorities after the first issue, it was not until the Boston Newsletter in 1704 that a paper was published with any regularity.

In 1732, as American-language newspapers were still in their forming stages, Benjamin Franklin published the first foreign language newspaper in the United States. Titled the Philadelphia Gazette (Philadelphische Zeitung), it was written entirely in German by a native Frenchman in Franklin's service.[1]

Massive immigration became characteristic of American society in its colonial period. On the eve of the American Revolution, Germans comprised about one-third the population of Pennsylvania or between 110,000 and 125,000 people. Pennsylvania German is the oldest immigrant language still in daily use in the United States.

In the years following, political, religious and economic causes drove millions of immigrants to America. The 1848 German Revolution and Hungarian Kossuth Revolt resulted in the immigration of thousands of refugees.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century marked a time of extensive immigration. Large scale emigrations from southern and eastern Europe (Italy, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland) occurred. The Italian migration in that period has been termed a mass movement.[2]

In the decade from 1880 to 1890 as many as one million Germans per year

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[1]Edward Hunter, In Many Voices - Our Fabulous Foreign-Language Press (Norman Park, Georgia: Norman College Publishers, 1960), p. 78.

[2]Jerzy Zubrzycki, "The Role of the Foreign-Language Press in Migrant Integration," Population Studies 12 (1958/1959): p. 75.

immigrated to the United States. Millions of Jews, predominantly Russian, arrived in America in the late 1800s. By 1917, as many as one and a half million lived in New York City alone, comprising one-fourth of the population.[3]

Until the 1920s, when the Immigration Quota Laws were passed, immigration occurred unchecked. Even today, it is estimated that the Spanish-speaking population grows by about 400,000 per year with a present total of approximately twenty million in the country.[4] This group includes Spanish-speaking Cubans and Spanish-speaking Mexicans or Chicanos. Chicago has experienced a recent influx of predominantly Chicanos, bringing its Spanish-speaking population of under 500,000 close to one million.[5]

In 1970, approximately one million Arabs, many of Lebanese-Christian origin, lived in the United States and Canada. Recent immigrations of Palestinians have increased that figure and introduced a group with no special allegiance to one Arab country.[6] The Korean community in the United States is estimated at 200,000, most of whom have settled in the country within the last seven years.[7]

Each year, more than 20,000 Chinese, almost all from Hong Kong, enter the United States. The McClellan Immigration Act of 1965 permits no more than 20,000 immigrants per year from any one country to enter the United States. The Act also makes special provision for those immigrants with relatives already living in the

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[3]Hunter, In Many Voices, p. 108.

[4]George Dickstein, "Second Language Thrives, Even As Generations Shift," Television/Radio Age XXV (November 1977): S-4,S-5.

[5]Ibid., p. S-8.

[6]Spyridon Granitsas, "Arab Papers Believe in Freedom of Press," Editor & Publisher, 12 December 1970, p. 18.

[7]Tae Guk Kim, "Korean Daily Newspapers Compete in United States," Editor & Publisher, 3 August 1976, p. 26.

United States and those with needed special skills. Both provisions benefit Chinese immigration. In addition to the Hong Kong immigrants, about 8,000 Chinese per year, predominantly from Taiwan, arrive in the United States on student visas. Only 2 percent return after completing their education.[8]

Filipinos comprise the largest growing Asian minority in the United States, and since 1968 have led all Asian countries in the number of immigrants arriving in this country. As of the 1970 census there were over 335,000 Filipinos in America, the majority living in the west.[9] Some ethnic populations have stabilized but others continue to increase.

Whether the immigrants arrived in America in the 1700s or within the last decade, one of their first actions upon arrival was to start a newspaper. The majority of these papers have been printed in the ethnic group language. Others have been printed completely in English or are bi-lingual to varying degrees. They range from daily publications to weeklies to bi-monthlies. As a group, they are termed ethnic newspapers, defined as those papers published in a foreign language or in English addressing themselves to a national group.[10] In their history, these newspapers have served various functions.

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[8]Andy McCue, "Evolving Chinese Language Dailies Serve Immigrants in New York City," Journalism Quarterly 52 (Summer 1975): p. 272.

[9]Donn V. Hart, "The Filipino-American Press in the United States: A Neglected Resource," Journalism Quarterly 54 (Spring 1977): 135-139.

[10]Granitsas, "Ethnic Press Alive and Well; 440 Published in the U.S.," Editor & Publisher, 28 November 1970, p. 12.

II. A. AID ASSIMILATION

Ethnic newspapers have historically performed the primary function of aiding immigrant assimilation into American society. Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language published in 1970 defines assimilation as: the cultural absorption of a minority group into the main cultural group. Only recently have increasing numbers of immigrants entered this country with some knowledge of English. Even then, there are language inadequacies and unfamiliarities. These people have relied on ethnic newspapers to explain America to them: to interpret its social, political and economic systems.[11] The ethnic press elucidates American laws and encourages new arrivals to become naturalized. The papers act as intermediaries between the immigrant's homeland and America, making his or her gradual adjustment possible. Through ethnic papers the immigrant meets those people in the United States experiencing the same shock of moving.

Robert Park stated in 1922 that ethnic papers in America often helped the immigrant establish the reading habit for the first time. Predominantly members of the peasant class, immigrants often arrived illiterate and from repressive societies where exchange of information was tightly controlled. The ethnic press in America encouraged a raising of the intellectual level of the immigrant.[12] For perhaps the first time, the immigrant took an active interest in issues and in a community that invited his/her participation.

During World War I, there was widespread distrust of foreigners, Germans in particular. Some states even banned the use of foreign languages. Ethnic newspapers kept people in touch with one another and supplied with vital information they might not otherwise have received.

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[11] Carl Wittke, The German Language Press in America (University of Kentucky Press, 1957), p. 2.

[12] Robert E. Park, The Immigrant Press and Its Control (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922), pp. 14-15.

In 1940 the Alien Registration Act was passed. The Italian paper, Il Progresso Italo-Americano, informed its readers how the law affected them and set up a bureau to assist them in registering.[13]

The New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold, the oldest continuing German newspaper in the United States, provides assistance to immigrants before they leave their homelands. A periodic newsletter distributed at immigration offices abroad reaches potential immigrants with information on establishing contact with sponsors in the United States. A 284-page almanac informs newly arrived immigrants about naturalization procedures, social security rules and methods for assisting others abroad to immigrate.[14]

After the Communist takeover in Cuba, thousands of Spanish-speaking refugees arrived in Florida, the majority settling in Dade County. Since that time, the Dade community has absorbed approximately 300,000 immigrants. In 1976, the Miami Herald started publishing a Spanish edition, El Miami Herald, designed to bring those thousands into fuller participation in the community life.[15]

In 1975, thousands of South Vietnamese refugees awaited passage to the United States on the island of Guam. The Gannett Newspaper Foundation established a tabloid paper for them, written and edited primarily by Vietnamese with previous news experience. The paper carried stories in Vietnamese and English on the condition of the Guam camps and the effects of the Communist takeover in Saigon. Generally, the paper lessened the fears of those inside and outside the camps by

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[13]Stefan Rodney, "Foreign-Language Papers Fire the U.S. Melting Pot," Editor & Publisher, 15 August 1959, p. 15, 60-62.

[14]Ibid.

[15]"El Miami Herald Gets Big Welcome," Editor & Publisher, 7 August 1976, p. 28.

keeping all fully informed.[16]

The vast majority of the more than 20,000 Chinese people arriving in the United States each year cannot read English. As a group they are from modern, urban environments and well-educated[12] but require the ethnic newspaper as an intermediary step. Jerzy Zubrzycki states that immigrants cannot wait until they master English before learning the essentials about their new country. The primary function of foreign-language newspapers is to prepare them for good citizenship.[18] Immigrants arrive in this country Americanized and informed about life in the United States to varying degrees. However, there are always aspects of America about which the immigrant will have little knowledge. The ethnic newspaper acts as a kind of instruction manual and a surrogate for the country, friends and relatives left behind.

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[16]"Vietnamese Refugees Start a Daily with Gannett Aid," Editor & Publisher, 24 May 1975, p. 20.

[17]McCue, "Chinese Language Dailies," p. 272.

[18]Zubrzycki, "Role of Foreign-Language Press," pp. 77-78.

II. B. PRESERVE ETHNICITY

Ethnic newspapers not only aid immigrant assimilation but also preserve ethnicity which Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary published in 1973 defines as ethnic quality or affiliation. Old immigration groups such as the Germans and Scandinavians continue to maintain their foreign-language papers. They no longer rely on them for assimilation purposes but as a link with the traditions of their homelands. Marion Marzolf sees the primary function of the Danish-American press today as one of transmitting a social heritage.[19] Recent immigration groups, still in the process of adjusting to a new society, utilize ethnic papers for their dual function - that of aiding assimilation while preserving ethnicity and group pride.

Marion Marzolf discounts the melting pot theory of American immigration -- the idea that all immigrant groups can be absorbed into society. Marzolf says that this simply does not happen, especially when less westernized groups such as Russians and Slavs emigrate.[20] Marzolf suggests that the twentieth century concept of cultural pluralism -- the view that ethnic groups contribute positively to American society and should retain not obscure their separate identities -- replaces the outdated and ethnocentric melting pot theory.[21]

The ethnic paper unites a cultural group and facilitates a sharing of traditional values. Some immigrants, though English-speaking, read foreign language papers that cater to their group interests by offering information on ethnic societies and clubs. Carl Wittke terms these papers ". . . the voice,

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[19]Marion Marzolf, "America's Enduring Ethnic Press" (Department of Journalism, University of Michigan, 1973), p. 12.

[20]Ibid., pp. 1-3.

[21]Ibid., p. 3.

the mirror, and the most active catalyzer of the life of any immigrant community."[22]

Sharon Murphy describes the role of the American-Indian press as one of promoting literacy among Indian tribes and of reporting the accomplishments of Indians.[23] Spyridon Granitsas in a 1971 article on the Jewish press states the purpose of the recently established Jewish Week, written in English. The paper hopes, he writes, to Judaize the descendents of immigrants.[24]

The Chicano press, a phenomenon of the 1960s, has been vital in organizing the Mexican-Americans by making them aware of national and community issues affecting them and improving communications within Chicano areas. These publications have been instrumental in the Chicano cultural renaissance that has produced novels, plays and films.[25]

Zubrzycki writes that ethnic newspapers maintain the social cohesion of immigrant groups. They promote group well-being by acting as social controls on possible delinquency and mental instability arising from cultural isolation.[26]

Foreign-language papers preserve the purity of languages. With the recent revival of interest in learning a second language, these papers are essential. Public and private schools on all levels subscribe to them for language classes.

There is a trend among second, third and fourth generation citizens to rediscover their cultural roots. In a 1977 study of the Spanish-speaking market in the United States, Eduardo Caballero, chairman of Spanish Media

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[22]Wittke, The German Language Press in America, p. v.

[23]Sharon Murphy, Other Voices: Black, Chicano and American Indian Press (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum/Standard, 1974), p. 60.

[24]Granitsas, "Ideologies Underlie Jewish Papers' Image," Editor & Publisher, 13 February 1971, p. 30.

[25]Murphy, Other Voices, p. 87.

[26]Zubrzycki, "Role of Foreign-Language Press," pp. 79-80.

Incorporated in New York, said:

> I dispute the commonly held belief of the general market that as more Hispanic people become educated in the United States, they will stop speaking Spanish and practicing their lifestyles. On the contrary we find second generation people to be very concerned about maintaining their heritage.[27]

The Spanish edition of the Miami Herald, first published in 1976, does not attempt to be a straight translation of the English Miami Herald. Through the news copy and art it attempts to reflect the unique nature of the Spanish culture.[28]

Robert Park stated in 1922 that immigrant papers would survive only as long as immigration continued.[29] The Immigration Acts of the 1920s contributed to reducing the number of foreign language papers but did not threaten their very existence.

The 1970 article in Editor & Publisher on ethnic papers in the United States estimates that there are more than fifty million ethnics in the United States.[30] This figure includes those people foreign born and those of foreign or mixed parentage.

Ethnicity is a dominant characteristic of this country's population. The growing acceptance of cultural pluralism as an enriching factor in society makes the ethnic press indispensable. Marion Marzolf states, "Ethnicity and Americanization then, both describe the American Experience."[31] The ethnic newspaper is vital in maintaining that mix.

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[27] Dickstein, "Second Language Thrives," pp. S-15-S-16.

[28] "El Miami Herald," p. 28.

[29] Park, The Immigrant Press and Its Control, p. 326.

[30] Granitsas, "Ethnic Press Alive and Well," p. 12.

[31] Marzolf, "America's Enduring Ethnic Press," p. 1.

II. C. FILL NEWS GAPS

Where mainstream American newspapers neglect groups, ethnic papers fill news gaps. Spyridon Granitsas in a 1971 Editor & Publisher article expressed the complaint of Indians living in the United States that American newspapers report little of their homeland news.[32] Indian students comprise one of the largest foreign groups in United States universities yet have no strong fraternal or religious organizations that might publish newsletters. This lack of coverage led to the founding of the paper, India Abroad, the only Indian newspaper listed in the 1977 Editor & Publisher Year Book.

The Chicano press arose in the 1960s as the voice of the emerging Mexican-American civil rights movement. It was designed to supplement the majority press coverage which carried little, if any, news of the California grape strike and the formation of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee.[33]

Sharon Murphy in Other Voices lists 175 American Indian publications in existence.[34] She discusses the 1970 formation of the news agency, The American Indian Press Association, to cover news which is slighted, misinterpreted or ignored by the majority press.[35] Areas of interest to American-Indians include pertinent programs, proposals and legislation, and urban and reservation Indian events.

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[32]Granitsas, "Indian Papers Strive to Fill News Gap for Immigrants Here," Editor & Publisher, 30 January 1971, p. 15.

[33]Murphy, Other Voices, pp. 86-87.

[34]Ibid., pp. 66-77.

[35]Ibid., p. 62.

II. D. OBSERVE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

Ethnic newspapers have historically been the watchdogs of foreign governments, aware of foreign government policy changes before mainstream American papers.[36] During World War II, Polish and other Slavic newspapers stated that Allied war policy was facilitating the Russian conquest of Eastern Europe. At that time, the papers were branded pro-Nazi.[37]

Yaroslav Chyz, who headed the Foreign Language Press Division of the Common Council from 1942 to 1948, suggested that American papers take more interest in the foreign language papers in the country. They would find out, he said, that those papers kept tabs on issues abroad for their possible implications for the United States. Chyz stated:

> Practically every blunder and misfortune that has befallen the Free World has been the subject of warning in the foreign language press, sometimes backed up by exclusive details from the spot.

He continued with:

> As a body, the editors of the American foreign-language press have been, and to a certain degree still are, one of the best informed groups on world affairs in this country."[38]

After World War II, the U.S. Italian press initiated a letter writing campaign among Italian-Americans to alert Italian citizens to a communist plan to take over the country by rigging ballot boxes. Following this pattern, the New Japanese American News featured a two-page editorial in 1960 uring persons of Japanese ancestry to write letters to friends, relatives and papers in Japan, urging ratification of the Security Pact between the two countries.

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[36] Hunter, In Many Voices, p. 180.

[37] Ibid., p. 115.

[38] Ibid., p. 181.

II. E. EXPAND UNITED STATES THOUGHT

Historically, ethnic newspapers have performed the theoretical function of contributing to the diversity of political and social thought in the United States. Stefan Rodney in 1959 termed these papers the shapers of democracy with their influential editorializing.[39] They have been responsible for a liberalizing effect on political thought. Edward Hunter describes the 1848 refugees of the German Revolution as politically liberal or radical and terms the impact of that liberalism on the United States as incalculable.[40] German papers prior to the Civil War opposed slavery and later argued against prohibition.

Early Jewish papers advocated socialism. In the 1971 article on Jewish papers in Editor & Publisher, the author describes the political stand of the paper Forward (Forwerts) as labor-liberal and cites the paper's role in the American Trade and Union movement. The article mentions the paper, Morgen Freiheit, as the initiator of campaigns for progressive causes.[41] Ethnic publications discouraged an extreme isolationism or insularity from dominating American thought.

Foreign-language papers counteract the tendency toward media concentration and diminishing media voices. Hunter states that individuality is still the hallmark of the foreign language papers.[42] Not only do these papers provide the media unit plurality that John C. Merrill discusses, but they insure the even more essential message plurality. As voices of diverse cultural groups, social background and political ideologies, foreign language papers keep alive

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[39] Rodney, "Foreign-Language Papers Fire the U.S. Melting Pot," p. 15.

[40] Hunter, In Many Voices, p. 73.

[41] Granitsas, "Jewish Papers," p. 16.

[42] Hunter, In Many Voices, p. 45.

the 'free marketplace of ideas' conception of the press in the United States. Increasing numbers of these papers are offering articles, editorials and pages in English. Thus, the ideas expounded are accessible to the general population.

III. A. HIGH MORTALITY AND FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Ethnic newspapers have encountered and still encounter problems that threaten their survival. A significant handicap is their high rate of closure due to financial insecurity. Zubrzycki states that, "Perhaps the most important single characteristic of the foreign-language press has been its high mortality." Between 1884 and 1920, 3,444 new foreign language papers were started and 3,186 discontinued.[43] Spyridon Granitsas writes that between 1940 and 1960 about 330 foreign language papers disappeared, and that in the 1960s 300 more went out of print.[44] From 1913 to 1960 German publications decreased from about 800 to 900 newspapers, magazines and periodicals to three dailies and thirty-three other papers such as weeklies or semi-weeklies.[45] A 1971 Editor & Publisher article predicts that in the 1970s almost all German papers will disappear.[46]

Edward Hunter states that the disappearance of the Jewish-language press in the near future is an accepted fate. The combined circulation of three New York Yiddish newspapers decreased from 125,000 in 1960 to about 90,000 by 1970.[47] One of those three, the Day-Jewish Morning Journal, closed in 1971 after 51 years of publication. During that time it had absorbed four of the six Yiddish papers being published and yet failed to survive.

Hunter comments that in no other publications is there such fluctuation of circulation as in the ethnic papers.[48] Marion Marzolf reports in a 1973

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[43] Zubrzycki, "Role of Foreign-Language Press," p. 76.

[44] Granitsas, "Ethnic Press Alive and Well," p. 12.

[45] Hunter, In Many Voices, pp. 75-76.

[46] Granitsas, "Dim Future is Seen for German Papers," Editor & Publisher, 16 January 1971, p. 34.

[47] Granitsas, "Jewish Papers," p. 16.

[48] Hunter, In Many Voices, p. 45.

research paper that the majority of those who read the Scandinavian-language papers are well beyond middle-age.[49] Such a limited readership contributes to the high mortality rate of these papers.

Most ethnic newspapers suffer continual financial set-backs. El Tiempo, a New York City Spanish daily, filed a bankruptcy petition in 1971 to enable it to continue publication. Previous to filing the petition the paper had taken steps to economize by reducing staff and help. The paper no longer exists as of the 1977 Editor & Publisher Year Book listings.

Two of the larger Detroit ethnic papers, the German Evening Post (Abend-Post) and the Polish Daily News (Dziennik Polaki), exist only with outside financial help. The Abend-Post shares a front office with a charter flight travel agency. The paper began as a daily, but due to rising newsprint costs and mailing rates, changed to a weekly in 1974. The Polish Daily News also started as a daily but now prints a Friday issue and a Saturday tabloid in English. To aid financial survival, the News prints two bi-weeklies for Chicago.[50]

The New Yorker Staats-Zeitung, with the largest circulation of the German-language papers, had labor and economic problems at least into 1971 as reported in an Editor & Publisher article. To boost finances the paper sells books and organizes motor tours for American and European tourists.[51]

German papers as a group are decreasing their editorial staffs and maintaining few correspondents and stringers. No paper now has a Washington correspondent. The Aufbau with a 1977 circulation of 22,155 plans to move out of

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[49]Marzolf, "America's Enduring Ethnic Press," pp. 14-15.

[50]Mitch Margo, "Ethnic Papers a Detroit 'Extra,'" Michigan Journalist, December 1977, p. 10.

[51]Staats-Herold Corp., "New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold Pamphlet," Facts About the Newspaper, New York City, 1978, p. 4.

New York City to lessen costs, and a Chicago bi-weekly is now published in Canada.[52]

Sharon Murphy discusses the financial difficulties many Chicano and American-Indian papers face. She points out that these papers are often written and published by staffs for whom the newspaper is a second or third job.[53] The papers' incomes simply cannot support paid workers.

Lansing's bi-lingual, Spanish-English paper, El Renacimiento, obtained a CETA grant of $10,000 in 1976. It had been on the brink of folding after running out of Model Cities funds two years previously. Though only a bi-monthly tabloid, the paper has always operated with a deficit and cannot afford to pay its employees. In addition, El Renacimiento prints brochures, flyers, business cards and Spanish publications.[54]

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[52]Granitsas, "Dim Future is Seen For German Papers," pp. 34-35.

[53]Murphy, Other Voices, p. 89.

[54]Yolando Alvarado, "Bilingual Paper Obtains Grant," Lansing State Journal, 19 January 1976.

III. B. DIVISIVENESS AND LOSS OF POWER

Just as mainstream American newspapers must face the charge that they have lost their individuality in the twentieth century, so must ethnic newspapers. However, ethnic papers face a dilemma peculiar to them. To avoid accusations of anti-American leanings and criticisms of being divisive forces in American society, many have become tame publications reduced to filling their pages with club and society notices.

Editor & Publisher reports that Swedish-American publications are no longer very political. When they do take stands, they are predominantly Republican and conservative.[55]

Zubrzycki describes the early Czechoslovakian press in the United States as strongly radical and anti-clerical. The American liberation of the Czech lands in 1918, however, affected the stance of those papers. By the early 1930s they were conservative in outlook with a distinct church leaning. They also increased their use of American syndicated material such as sports, features and cartoons and allowed more space for English-language items.[56]

During World War II foreign powers subsidized various ethnic papers in the United States for their own propaganda. Zubrzycki cites primarily Nazi and Fascist organs as such collaborators.[57] The majority of Italian newspapers in America owed their allegiance to Mussolini, and as a result suffered disastrous circulation losses. Hunter states that most second generation Italians now turn to English newspapers.[58]

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[55]Granitsas, "Swedish-American Journals: Two Worlds and Two Policies," Editor & Publisher, 27 February 1971, p. 13.

[56]Zubrzycki, "Role of Foreign-Language Press," p. 77.

[57]Ibid., p. 81.

[58]Hunter, In Many Voices, p. 96.

Donn Hart, in discussing the contemporary Filipino press, says that these newspapers devote their greatest coverage to Filipino group life and interests. The predominantly English-speaking Filipinos obtain United States and foreign news from the majority press or television.[59]

A striking example of an ethnic press that has lost its former power is the German-language press. The case of the New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold exemplifies the kind of changes German papers have undergone to survive. Established in 1834, the Staats-Zeitung was pro-Andrew Jackson in its early years, and evidence suggests the paper was founded to oppose the Whig party.[60] The paper consistently supported labor and the small shopkeeper.

The Staats-Zeitung thoroughly covered the 1848 German Revolution, sending reporters to meet every ship on its arrival from Europe. The paper's editorials and war coverage were picked up by smaller German papers throughout the United States. Recording the suppression of liberal newspapers in Germany, the Staats-Zeitung devoted extensive space to the arrest and prosecution of political offenders. It appealed to its readers to fund the revolution and its victims. Jakob Uhl, then the paper's owner, directed a nation-wide campaign to raise funds for the relief of political exiles and their families.[61]

Oswald Ottendorfer, owner of the Staats-Zeitung after Uhl's death in 1852, fought Tammany Hall and Tweed Ring corruption and himself ran unsuccessfully for New York City mayor in 1874. As did other German publications, the Staats-Zeitung opposed temperance legislation and blue laws. It outspokenly defended personal liberty and the Continental Sunday, which permitted shops to do business

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[59]Hart, "Filipino-American Press," pp. 135-139.

[60]Wittke, The German Language Press in America, p. 45.

[61]Ibid., p. 68.

on that day.[62]

In the 1880s the Staats-Zeitung initiated a profit-sharing plan for its employees, a socialistic idea that found little favor in American society.[63]

With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, the Staats-Zeitung featured a daily column of war news. The paper supported Woodrow Wilson's pleas for disarmament and a league of nations. Up to the United States' entrance into World War I, the paper opposed American intervention and assured Wilson of the loyalty of all Americans of German ancestry. Once the United States entered the war, the Staats-Zeitung called for the overthrow of the military German autocracy. Bernard Ridder, then owner of the paper, made speeches to stimulate the war spirit.[64]

Assurances of loyalty to America did the Staats-Zeitung little good. In 1917, some states circulated petitions demanding the suppression of all German papers. Newsstands and dealers boycotted German papers which then all but disappeared from public view. Local governments withdrew any official notices from German publications. Even a large paper like the Staats-Zeitung barely survived as circulation plummeted. Carl Wittke writes that "World War I struck the German-language press a blow from which it has never recovered."[65]

Although most German papers during World War I were strongly pro-American, they subsequently lost nearly half their circulation. Edward Hunter writes that they were inclined afterwards to avoid editorializing and to print more club and

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[62] Ibid., p. 163.

[63] Ibid., p. 174.

[64] Ibid., p. 266.

[65] Ibid., p. 274.

social items.[66] He states in his 1960 book that from the Staats-Zeitung's start until the last few decades, it had not hesitated to take ". . . deep draughts of politics."[67] During the Nazi period, the Staats-Zeitung tried as far as possible to avoid issues. This put the newspaper in the uncomfortable position described by Ludwig Oberndorf in 1960. "We of the Staats-Zeitung were considered Nazis by the Jews and Jews by the Nazis."[68] Edward Hunter wrote in 1960 that German editors were now confronted with giving spirit back to the German press in a present day context. He states, however, that "Little effort to do so can be discerned."[69] He terms German papers today "tame."

The Staats-Zeitung illustrates the dilemma of ethnic newspapers. When they are powerful, outspoken organs they risk the antagonism of mainstream American society. Yet, when they avoid editorializing they often become listless publications. They must find an appropriate role to play and one which society will allow them to play.

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[66]Hunter, In Many Voices, p. 83.

[67]Ibid., p. 71.

[68]Ibid., p. 84.

[69]Ibid.

IV. FUTURE OF ETHNIC PAPERS

It is impossible to predict the general future of the ethnic press. Each national group is at a different stage of assimilation and growth. The Germans and Scandinavians are among the oldest immigrant groups and in little need of special newspapers to aid their assimilation. On the other hand, the influx of other nationalities such as Chinese and Cubans is relatively recent. Their need for a foreign language press is more urgent. The various ethnic group population figures range from the approximately 200,000 Koreans living in the United States to the estimated twenty million Spanish-speaking Americans.

Some ethnic newspapers are experiencing growth. Marion Marzolf cites 1970 figures indicating a circulation increase in Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Chinese and Japanese newspapers.[70] From 1960 to 1970 there was little Japanese immigration to North America, yet Japanese ethnic newspapers nearly doubled their circulation.[71]

Other ethnic papers show steady decline in circulation. In 1975, the Staats-Zeitung, then the only German-language daily left in New York City, had a daily circulation of 10,120 and a Sunday circulation of 25,087. As of 1977, the paper only appeared weekly, reporting circulation figures of 25,087. Editor and Publisher Year Book listed 252 principal foreign language newspapers in 1973 and 240 in 1977.

Various ethnic newspapers are making efforts to broaden their readerships. Most subscribers to Detroit's Abend-Post are over the age of fifty. The paper

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[70] Marzolf, "America's Enduring Ethnic Press," p. 13.

[71] Granitsas, "Nisei Papers Favor Trade Over Politics," Editor & Publisher, 13 March 1971, p. 13.

is taking steps to attract younger readers by adding two pages of sports, a column of local and European soccer and by sponsoring a children's soccer team.[72]

The Chinese press in New York City, now experiencing a rebirth, has technically improved its newspapers to the point where they are almost unrecognizable to readers of ten years ago.[73] The early Chinese newspapers focused on homeland news and the various factions there struggling for power. Then in 1969, the Sing Tao Jih Pao, a Hong Kong paper, arrived in New York. It was technically and editorially better than the American-Chinese newspapers.[74]

When a new Chinese paper, The China Post, started publishing in New York in 1972, it employed new techniques to gain readers. Within a year and a half its circulation equaled that of its two competitors, the earlier mentioned Sing Tao and the United Journal. It published more factual features such as sports and entertainment. Local news coverage, a weak point of the earlier Chinese ethnic papers, was expanded and upgraded. The proportion of advertising to copy decreased.[75] The new wave of Chinese immigrants, predominantly Hong Kong-born, better educated and more acquainted with modern thought then the older rural immigrants, demanded a different type of newspaper. They wanted news of Chinatown, New York City, not extensive homeland coverage. The China Post recognized its audience needs and catered to these.

Publishers of Jewish papers printed in English are optimistic about their newspapers' possibilities for growth. The Jewish Week, written in the modern American idiom, is accessible to English-speaking descendants of immigrants and

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[72]Margo, "Ethnic Papers a Detroit 'Extra,'" p. 10.

[73]McCue, "Chinese Language Dailies," p. 272.

[74]Ibid., p. 273.

[75]Ibid., pp. 274-275.

American non-Jewish opinion leaders. Editors of the Yiddish-language newspapers are less optimistic about their potential readership. However, they cite the possible future emigration of the estimated 400,000 Yiddish-speaking Russian Jews as a factor that would enlarge their audience. The Yiddish paper, the Forward, also decided in 1971, for the first time in its seventy-four year existence, to print a full page of English articles and editorials to attract American-born readers.[76]

Japanese-American newspapers are bi-lingual. Originally published to cater to immigrant needs, the papers added English sections as American-born Japanese grew up and would not read in the Japanese language. The newspapers realized their audience consisted of Japanese-speaking elders living in the United States, English-speaking Japanese living in the United States and native Japanese. The papers changed format to suit those readership demands.

In March 1976, the first issue of El Miami Herald appeared. Schools within Florida and out requested the paper for their language classes. The sales manager stated that to the staff's knowledge it was the first dual-language newspaper to be selectively distributed to seven-day subscribers.[77] Ralph Costantino, station manager of WJIT New York said, "I see no end to Hispanic development. I believe we will be a bilingual continent before the end of the century."[78] Strategy Research Corporation conducted a 1977 survey which found that English is spoken most of the time in only 3 percent of New York's

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[76]Granitsas, "Jewish Papers," p. 30.

[77]"El Miami Herald," p. 28.

[78]Dickstein, "Second Language Thrives," p. S-16.

Hispanic homes, 7 percent of Chicago's households and 8 percent of Miami's.[79] If the population of Spanish-speaking Americans continues to grow at its present rate, the demand for ethnic newspapers will continue.

The Chicano Press began in the 1960s to cover the Mexican-American civil rights movement. Sharon Murphy lists nearly sixty Chicano publications, several of which are presently independent and financially strong.[80] It is too soon to predict the future of such papers. The need for them at present is too immediate.

The flourishing American-Indian press is a recent phenomenon. During the period from 1905 to 1950, no American-Indian papers were published regularly. The American-Indian Press Association was formed as recently as 1970 to inform Indians on a variety of issues ignored by the majority press. The number of Indian newspapers, magazines and journals is still increasing as American Indians rediscover a heritage long obscured. The nearly 175 Indian publications in existence are proof of such an interest. However, it is pure speculation whether this trend will continue, for like the Chicano press, the need is too immediate to predict a healthy future.

Marion Marzolf lists five factors that determine the longevity of an ethnic press. These are: 1. crisis or war in the homeland, 2. news not well covered by American press, 3. cohesiveness of group, 4. religious unity, and 5. prejudice from American core society.[81]

In evaluating the future of a particular ethnic press, it is necessary to examine its newspapers in the light of such criteria. The histories of the various ethnic presses have not been uniform, nor can their futures be. They

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[79]Ibid., p. S-14.

[80]Murphy, Other Voices, pp. 92-95.

[81]Marzolf, "America's Enduring Ethnic Press," p. 13.

have arisen in response to varying needs, in varying historical periods and to accommodate varying numbers of readers. They have also responded differently to the changing demands upon them. At the moment, American society is rediscovering its roots and component groups. Many think this will affect the ethnic press favorably. However, the present period is a transitional one, and it is too soon to state whether or not it will, and if so, to what degree.

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